

# Childhood Lead Poisoning

## What causes lead poisoning?

There are many factors that contribute to lead poisoning in children, but the most significant is how much lead is taken into the child's body. The most common source of lead in our home environment is old leaded paint. Most homes built before 1960 have lead paint on the windows, doors, trim and walls. Some houses built since then can still contain significant lead hazards. This paint becomes a problem when it gets old, breaks down, or is disturbed by construction or demolition. Lead dust and lead chips present a large danger to young children. Other sources of lead include soil, water, and leaded items accessible to the child (products including some types of mini-blinds, pottery, cosmetics, toys, traditional medicines, imported canned food, batteries, and plumbing have been found to contain lead).

## Why is lead a problem?

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause serious health problems if the levels get high enough. In young children (especially those under 6 years old), lead can disrupt the normal development of the brain and nerves, resulting in serious neurological impairment and slowed intellectual development. At high enough levels, lead can cause problems with your kidneys and blood cells, coma, convulsions, and death, even in adults.

## How can I find out if my child has (children have) been exposed to lead?

Most children with lead poisoning have no obvious symptoms while they are being poisoned. The only way to know if a child has lead poisoning is for them to have a blood test.

## How can I protect my family from lead hazards in my dwelling?

- Keep areas where children play clean and dust free. Wet dust, mop, and wash items and areas in a soapy / detergent solution regularly. Have children wash their hands often, especially before eating.
- Leave lead-based paint that is in good condition alone. Sanding, scraping and burning off lead paint can produce severe hazards. Repair and seal areas where paint is peeling, chipping, or cracking.
- Do not try to remove lead paint on your own. Bring in professionals who know how to contain and clean up lead hazards to do the job properly.
- Do not bring lead dust into your home. If you work in an industry that involves lead, change clothes before entering your home, and wash work clothes professionally where it will not contaminate the family laundry.
- Use only the cold water supply for water used in cooking, drinking, and making beverages. Flush the water from the line until the water feels cold to the touch.
- Eat a balanced diet that includes healthy levels of calcium and iron. Proper nutrition will play a role in helping to block the absorption of lead if your child does ingest it.

**Is more information available?**

If Nassau County residents have additional questions or concerns regarding Lead in their dwelling, they can call the NC Department of Health – Residential Environment Unit at **516-227-9415**.

For additional information on lead, please visit the following web site(s):

New York State Department of Health - Lead Hazard Product Recalls

[www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead/recalls](http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead/recalls)

US Consumer Product Safety Commission - Product Recalls

[www.cpsc.gov/](http://www.cpsc.gov/)

US Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov/oppt/lead/](http://www.epa.gov/oppt/lead/)

American Lung Association

<http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK9O0E&b=35383>

US Centers for Disease Control

[www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm)